

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2012

The Norwegian Nobel Committee
The Norwegian Nobel Institute
Henrik Ibsens Gate 51
0255 OSLO
Norway

To Whom It May Concern:

“When you love somebody, you live it.” These words were spoken by the founder and CEO of Stephen’s Children ministry, Maggie Gobran. As Members of the United States House of Representatives we write today to nominate “Mama Maggie”, as she is affectionately known by many, for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize. This is a woman who has dedicated her life to serving the poorest of the poor in Egypt and has often been referred to as the “Mother Teresa of Cairo.” After years of working as a successful manager at a marketing firm and later as a professor of computer science, Ms. Gobran became inspired to make a difference during a visit to the destitute neighborhoods of Cairo. Mama Maggie founded Stephen’s Children in 1989, a ministry dedicated to serving the disenfranchised populations living in the city’s garbage slums and impoverished areas of Upper Egypt. Having previously been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on multiple occasions, Ms. Gobran is a woman of the utmost integrity and her tireless work has served thousands of Egyptians, including countless children. She has given a voice to the poorest of the poor.

Stephen’s Children serves all needy Egyptians, including both Coptic Christians—a religious minority group that faces considerable persecution, discrimination and hardship in Egypt—and disadvantaged Muslim children as well. The Coptic Christian community is the largest religious minority in Egypt today. In fact, it is the largest minority in the entire Middle East. The Copts have faced difficulties from the Arab conquest of Egypt to the present. The most recent U.S. State Department report on international religious freedom, released prior to the 2011 revolution, found that the Egyptian government, “failed to redress laws relating to church construction and renovation, as well as practices, especially in government hiring, that discriminate against Christians. This allowed their discriminatory effects on society to become further entrenched.”

An estimated 10 million Coptic Christians lived in Egypt prior to the revolution, but human rights reports suggest that up to 100,000 of this population have already left Egypt—and this number continues to grow. As with other sudden, mass exoduses in world history, this one is a sure sign that the minority community fears persecution. Of the nearly 10 million Christians in Egypt, roughly half of them live in abject poverty. The Zabbaleen, or “garbage people,” are

Coptic Christians who have lived in the trash dumps for over a century. The conditions of the slums are abhorrent. Many families live in one room shacks without electricity, sewage systems, public transportation or medical care. There is very little or no access to clean water and many are forced to scavenge for food. These are the very people that Stephen's Children and Ms. Gobran serve.

Coptic Orthodox herself, it is through her deep religious and moral commitment that Mama Maggie has succeeded in creating an organization that serves the most poor, desperate and vulnerable population of Egypt. Since its founding in 1989, Stephen's Children has rapidly expanded. In 2010, the organization had 65 camps, 5 vocational centers, 80 clinics, and 80 community education centers serving 14,375 children. A remarkable 27,953 families were served by Stephen's Children in 2010 alone. Mama Maggie's work seeks to lift these individuals out of poverty by providing them with the values, skills and education needed to become productive members of Egyptian society.

Clothed entirely in white, Mama Maggie is almost an angelic presence in Egypt's slums, embodying the virtues of generosity, gentleness and charity. We are honored to submit this letter of nomination for Maggie Gobran for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize—a woman whose humility and authenticity have led to her dedicate her life to helping the world's poorest.

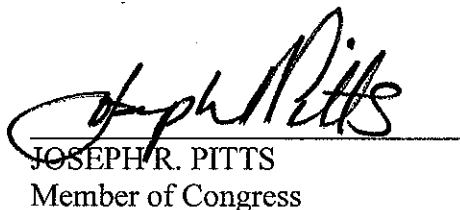
Sincerely,



FRANK R. WOLF
Member of Congress



BILL HUIZENGA
Member of Congress



JOSEPH R. PITTS
Member of Congress



ROBERT B. ADERHOLT
Member of Congress



JOHN R. CARTER
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